



Air tanker sucks water from lake for Rodeo fire. See pgs 4& 5.

# ALASKA People

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July /August 2002

## Bisson on board as new State Director

Ever since July 15 when **Henri Bisson** came aboard as our state director, there's been a flurry of meetings, briefings and more meetings. A self-described quick study, he says within the next few months he aims to get up to speed on Alaska issues.

He's not that unfamiliar with Alaska issues, however. While serving as our assistant director for renewal resources and planning in Washington, D.C. he made a few fact-finding trips to our state. In that capacity, he oversaw programs such as fisheries, forestry, recreation, cultural resources, land use planning and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance and services provided by BLM's National Science and Technology Center in Denver. He also worked on Alaska program and budget issues during another tour to D.C.

At his first all employees meeting on July 24, he told employees that he was excited and grateful to be our state director. It's been almost 30 years since he started with BLM as a young forester looking to that day when he would become a state director. He says Alaska was his first choice.

Having grown up in New Hampshire, Bisson welcomes Alaska's winter and outdoors. Of

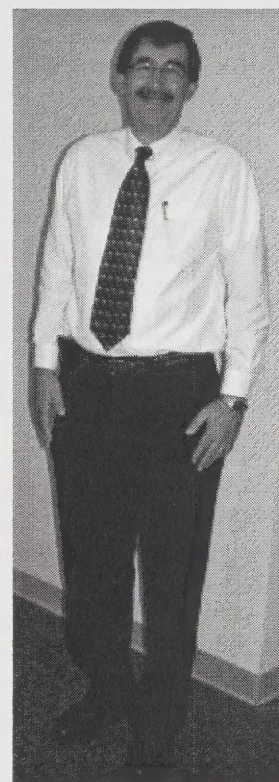
French Canadian ancestry, he says he lived in New Hampshire long enough to graduate from the University of New Hampshire with a B.S. in forestry. He later received a M.S. in watershed management from the University of Arizona.

He began his career with BLM in 1974, and has an extensive planning background serving as an interagency and district planners. He's been a district division fire chief and a district manager in Phoenix, AZ and Riverside, CA.

His accomplishments include the permitting of major mining operations and interstate pipelines as well as completion of several major land management plans and plan amendments. He played a major role in recent legislation that led to the expansion of U.S. Army's Ft. Irwin National Training Center in California.

He is married to Pamela and has a grown son and daughter. When he's not in the office you'll probably find him in the woods hunting or fishing. His serious and earnest manner may not bespeak his lighter side. He says he likes to have fun while he works and is known to crack an occasional joke.

*The following questions give some insight into our new state director.*



Henri Bisson

**What talents do you bring to the management table?** I have considerable leadership and management experience. I was district manager in Phoenix from 1987-1992, where I worked on the largest land exchange program in

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## Q&A — with the State Director

the Bureau, and dealt with minerals and Indian issues. I was district manager of the California District 1992-1998.

### Describe yourself?

Decent person, hardworking, dedicated. I care about the work of the Bureau. I will focus on the priorities and I will push to get them accomplished. When I look at issues, I see shades of gray, not black or white.

**What's your management style?** Participatory management. I'm easy to get along with as long as people do their job.

**What are your goals/priorities?** My priorities will be those of the Secretary and those outlined in the President's energy policy, the Trans Alaska Pipeline System renewal, establishing a time frame for the NPR-A northwest plan, achieving our business goals, conveyances... I'd like to establish a cohesive work environment... and identify changes that can be made to systems and processes. There is always room for improvement.

**What's on your plate for the next couple of months?** Getting a feel for ongoing issues and I'm looking for recommendations from the leadership team.

# From SD to Deputy Director

**Fran Cherry** accepted his new job assignment like he accepts most things — with a good-natured nonchalance. His latest assignment makes him second in charge of the national BLM — right behind Director Kathleen Clarke. As deputy director, he'll see to the day-to-day operations of the Bureau from our Washington, D.C. office.

Although he says he didn't lobby for the position, it's quite an accomplishment for a small town boy growing up in Price, UT.

Cherry, Alaska's state director since May 1999, said he was reluctant to leave. He was especially proud of Alaska's integral part in the national energy initiative with the implementation of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska. His priorities included oversight of the Trans Alaska Pipeline and the conveyance of public lands to Alaska Natives and the State of Alaska.

While Cherry had quite the reputation for his many travels, it wasn't until his going away luncheon at the Hilton that associate state director **Linda Rundell** revealed that all his trips were not without incident. She recounted trip after trip that went awry. She spoke of trips to the North Slope where Cherry and his VIP guests endured "hot sheeting." Hot sheeting occurs when there is a shortage of sleeping quarters



Ed Boy

Larry Crane has the SD's going away card while Fran holds a gift, a oil painting done by Crane.

which requires individuals to share accommodations. This is accomplished by people working different shifts and sheets are replaced after each shift. She also related an infamous North Slope trip when Cherry and Director Tom Frey

shared an office for the night and were awoken early in morning by nicotine hungry oil patch workers who wanted to get to the cigarettes stored in their "room."

There were

also stories of Cherry soothing visiting Washington Office VIPs not accustomed to outhouses, vicious mosquitoes and the Alaska way of doing business. Through it all, he was always pleasant and unruffled.



SD Fran Cherry converses with Lands br. mgr. Mike Haskins and ASD Linda Rundell at his going away reception.



## employee profile

Hunting. Fishing. Being alone in the Great Land and getting a rush knowing he's not at the top of the food chain, that's **Carlton Thorpe** for you. Another great outdoorsman and around BLM, he's the fuel guy.

Thorpe is the fuel distribution systems worker based at the Campbell Tract Facility. He travels the state setting up fuel sites for Department of Interior helicopters (mostly BLMers) use.

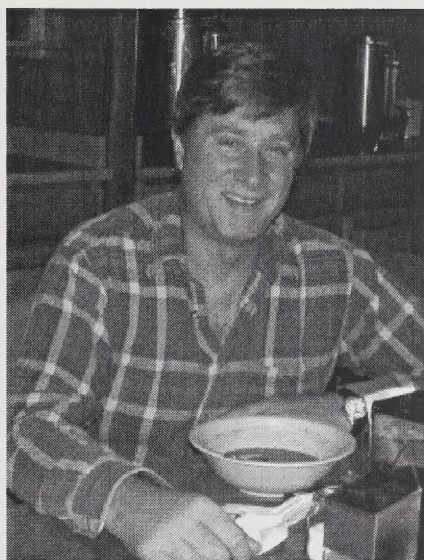
He said working with aviation fuels makes him self-directed and more detailed-oriented... "I think you'd be hard pressed to find anyone in BLM who has been into more airstrips across this state than I."

Thorpe came to Alaska more than 27 years ago. He began his BLM career as a fire dispatcher for the Anchorage District Office. After three years he switched to air cargo and became a loadmaster at the Campbell Airstrip.

He started his federal career with the U.S. Forest Service in Ellensburg, Washington in 1966. He was a firefighter for a number of years and cruised timber to pay for his college education.

Thorpe said, "I have always been a small town boy at heart." He loves being on the water, and recently bought a place on Prince of Wales Island (Thorne Bay). After he retires in September, he plans to cruise Southeast Alaska in his boat.

**What are some of your accomplishments during your time in service?** Keeping fuel ahead of the helicopters out there in the field is a major accomplishment in my book. It's one of the behind-the-scenes functions which folks hardly give a second thought.



### Carl Thorpe Fuels Specialist

**What are some of the fond memories of times spent on the job?** My fondest memories involve my hardest days in the field... We're loading the Argosy with all the gear from Cadastral camp at the end of a long season. It's snowing, blowing, dark, and everyone wants to be home. We hustle and shove the last tent box in over our heads. I curse as the engines scream to life before we get the doors closed. Airborne at last and headed for home, all I can think of is unloading this beast tomorrow... I know there are still a few who remember those days.

#### **What is BLM's weakest link and how would you make changes?**

I think that this organization is guided much more by politics than it needs to be. I have come to accept that as the nature of the beast. I do my job well and take full responsibility for my actions.

**What is BLM's strongest link?** I think there are some great folks in this organization, many who I consider my friends.

**If terrorists were to attack Alaska, do you think the fuels stored at CTF would be a target?** CTF would make a poor target because a minimum of fuel is stored there. I have always felt that the airstrip is a great asset and that it could be used more than it is now. In an emergency, such as an earthquake, it might be the only usable runway in the Anchorage bowl.

"My fondest memories involve my hardest days in the field."

Carl Thorpe

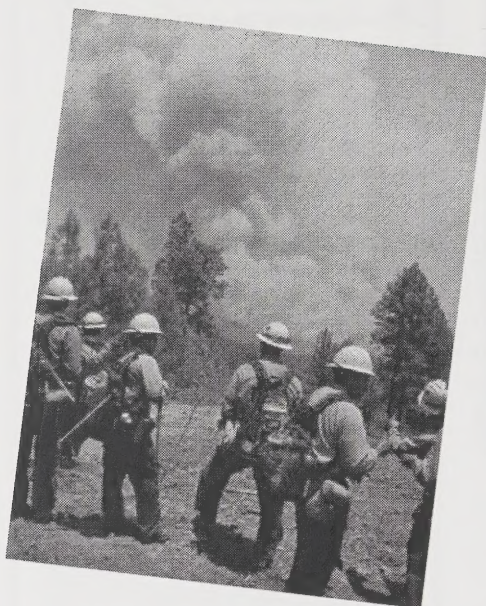
**What is your ultimate (not last) meal?** A little backstrap from an Idaho mule deer, roasted over the coals with just a dash of salt and pepper. A big russet potato with a gob of butter. Add a couple of beers and the buddy who helped me pack that deer out.

**Do you read much?** I love to read mostly non-fiction. American history.

**What are the names of the most recent books you've read or are reading?** I recently read Stephen Ambrose's book *The Wild Blue*, and am re-reading my favorite Alaskan book, *No Room for Bears* by Frank Dufresne. I also read anything I can find on Lewis and Clark.

*Ella Wright is a writer-editor with Support Services.*



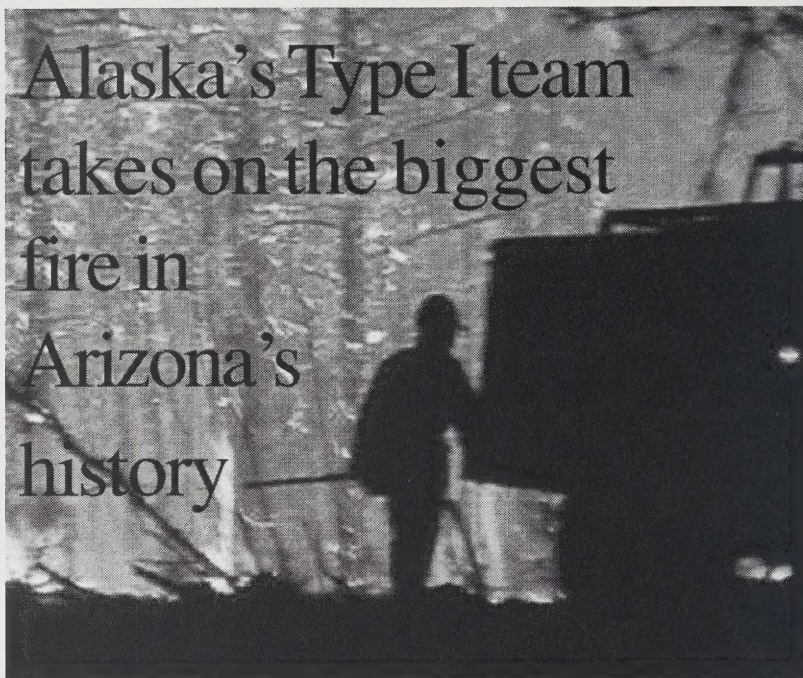


Ground crews sizing up the fire.

“GIS is not usually apart of the incident command system but it was put to good use on the Rodeo-Chediski fire... We took data from GPS, infrared and put it all together for the daily maps.”

Lynnette Nakazawa,  
GIS specialist from AFS

## Alaska's Type I team takes on the biggest fire in Arizona's history



The Lower 48's fire season started early this year. Blazes in Colorado and Arizona kicked off the season with our Type I team getting in on the action by going to Arizona in June to do battle on one of the largest fires in that state's history.

Alaska's type I team arrived in Arizona, June 22 to a fire so big that it was split into quadrants. Each quadrant

was assigned an incident commander. **David Dash**, Alaska's team incident commander, set up command at Cibecue on the Ft. Apache reservation about three miles south of the fire. He said it was your standard fire, just bigger. “Tactically it was not that different from any other fire that the team had fought,” he says.

The fire known as the Rodeo-Chediski fire complex burned hot and fast. By July 8, the 461,965-



The fire is mapped daily. John See, fire behavior analyst with the state of Alaska points to unidentified mapper while Brian Lamb, computer specialist (seated) takes a break from his work.





The charred sign is a reminder of fire's devastating effects.



Ponderosa pine and pinion pine are typically found throughout the terrain within the White Mountain Apache Tribe reservation.



Timber industry losses exceed \$250 million.

Dash and the rest of team. "It was the people we worked with that made the fire different. . . the Apache people, said Dash.

"The land has historical and cultural significance," said public information officer **Andy Williams**. "The Apaches lost substantial commercial income, about \$200 million from the timber industry."

While the fire was devastating to the Apaches, it was a challenge for our firefighters. Cadastral Survey's **Mike Eldridge**, a facilities unit leader trainee says,

"It was the biggest, baddest, meanest fire I'd ever been on." He and many of this fellow firefighters came back to Alaska exhausted due to the long and hard days and nights.

When the fire was in its mopup stage and the team was ready to rotate out, a closeout was held where the Indians danced and bestowed the firefighters with gifts. Eldridge and the others were taken by the graciousness of the Apache people. "The closeout is usually a cut and dried affair," says Williams, "but . . . it was a moving and heartfelt occasion. . . The people were wonderful, supportive, they couldn't have been kinder."



Kris Ericksen (State of Alaska (kneeling)) posts newspaper articles, fire situation reports and practically anything people in camp want to know on an information bulletin board. Several info boards were located throughout base camp and at schools.

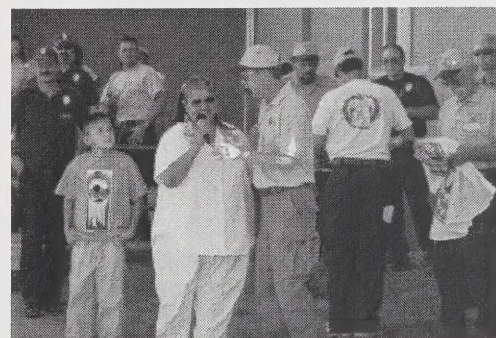
acre blaze was contained and the following day, Alaska's team, working in the fire's southern zone handed the fire back to the Bureau of Indian Affairs Fort Apache Agency.

"The impact on these people was significant. The reservation economy was burned up," says Dash.

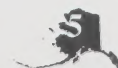
But it was the effects on the people that were noteworthy to

"It was the biggest, baddest, meanest fire I'd ever been on."

Mike Eldridge  
facility unit ldr.  
trainee



After the closeout/debriefing the team assembles outside to chat. Some ICS team members (all in dark attire) include (l-r ), front- David Dash, incident commander, back- Tony Doty, logistics section chief, far right- Bill Beebe, information officer.





## Director's Science Advisory Board Meets in Anchorage

The director's national science advisory board met in Anchorage Aug. 5 to discuss science strategy, peer review and curriculum development.

Former Alaskan traveling with the board was **Lee Barkow**, who is staff to the board and BLM's director of the National Science Technology in Denver. Barkow was a former planning chief at the Anchorage District Office years ago. **Mike Penfold**, our former Alaska state director, is a board member but didn't make this trip.

A highlight of the board's visit to Alaska was a trip to the Bering Glacier outside Cordova where BLM is working in partnership with the University of Alaska and other agencies to conduct scientific studies in the area. The six-person board advises the director on scientific matters and applications to natural resource management. Board meetings are held three times a year in western states where BLM manages land.



Mike Zaidlicz

*Ready for War?* (l-r) Clad in flight suits and sporting mosquito headnets and rifles, Anchorage Field Office resources manager Clinton Hanson and NFO engineering chief Curt Fortenberry review the Sullivan Creek bridge which is slated to be replaced. The bridge is 15 miles south of Nikolai on the Iditarod National Historic Trail which is managed by the BLM.



David Green

Biologist John Payne (aka Mr. Bering Glacier) and student volunteer Parker Madsen inspect the effects of the Bering Glacier on vegetation.

## Camp Bering Glacier

For one intense month beginning July 15, Resources wildlife biologist **John Payne** oversees the operations at a research camp BLM operates at the Bering Glacier outside Cordova. For the last six

years, BLM, the University of Fairbanks and other agencies have studied the glacier's retreat and its affect on vegetation, fisheries and seals in the area.

## Get your bug dope: field season is here

*The days are long, but Alaskan summers are short. Each year BLM biologists, botanists, archaeologists, realty specialists and surveyors around the state pack lots of field work into three short months.*

Anchorage Field Office AFO specialists are measuring proper functioning conditions on the Anvik River drainage, a critical chum salmon stream. Ongoing mountain goat surveys at Haines will help scientists evaluate impacts of helicopters on goat populations. Other specialists are completing wilderness and wild and scenic river inventory work in the Haines area, throughout parts of the Aleutians, and in west Cook Inlet.

Northern Field Office Construction began this summer on the Coldfoot Interagency Visitor Center and should be complete by January 2003. Exhibits will be installed and staff will be ready by the summer of 2003 for visitors

who travel the Denali Highway to reach Coldfoot, located in the Brooks Range between Fairbanks and Deadhorse.

Glennallen Field Office The GFO, the National Park Service (NPS) Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program and the Copper River Watershed Project worked together to install a geotextile fabric and plastic porous pavement panels over more than 4,000 feet of the Middle Fork Gulkana River Trail (sometimes called the Meiers Lake Trail) at Mile 69 of the Richardson Highway. The project is experimental to test the materials wear on the notoriously boggy and rutted trail. Core funding came from a \$30,000 state recreation trail grant.



# Cool News

*State Director Sworn in.* August 5 was a big day for Northern Field Office ranger **Ed Lee** and state director **Henri Bisson**. At an ceremony held just outside the SD's suite, Lee was recognized for his six months service as an air marshal and Bisson was officially sworn in as state director by BLM director Kathleen Clarke. Noting her 60,000 miles flown last year, Clarke said she felt a whole lot safer knowing Lee was on board. She spoke warmly of Bisson, saying he was one of the first employees in Washington to work with her and head off potential problems.

Later in the evening director



Ed Lee



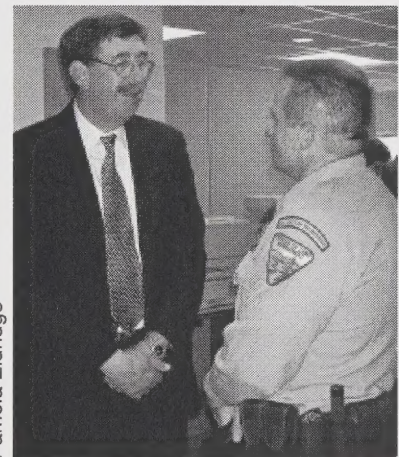
Pamela Eldridge

Employees and staff were on hand at a reception following the state director's swearing in. (l-r Kathleen Clarke, director; Nolan Heath, resources chief; Jody Weil, external affairs chief; Gene Terland, resources branch chief; Peter Ditton, acting Anchorage field manager, Henri Bisson, state director).

Clarke attended a lively public hearing on the renewal of the permit for the Trans Alaska Pipeline at the Anchorage Hilton. More than 150 people were in attendance with impassioned comments made from the oil industry, environmentalists and the public.

*Second Place Goes to Glennallen Field Office.* The GFO took second place in the annual Glennallen Fourth of July parade with a float celebrating use of public lands

while practicing "Leave No Trace" principles. Hundreds of spectators turned out to view a record 52 patriotic entries. Seasonal outdoor recreation planner **Mary Smith** led



Pamela Eldridge

State Director Henri Bisson congratulates NFO's Ed Lee for his six month duty as an air marshal.



Marcia Butorac

Getting ready to launch BLM's fourth of July float are (l-r) Colt Radigan, Mary Smith, Tarah Nelson, Lauren Colburn, Timbra Nelson, Tammy Larzelere and Erin Diurba.

the design and construction of BLM's entry. She was assisted primarily by Student Conservation Association volunteers **Erin Diurba** and **Tammy Larzelere**. Also assisting were **Colt Radigan** and **DeAngelo Hudgins**, both participants are in the school/work partnership program with the Glennallen Field Office and the Copper River School District. Timbra and Tarah Nelson, Sasha and Kellyn Mushovic and Lauren Colburn, all daughters of GFO employees, also helped out.



# Surveyors Do the Fig

by Frank Hardt

**Jerry Pinkerton, Frank Hardt** and **Orrin Frederick** were in Washington D.C. in April attending the 22nd FIG (Federation of International Surveyors) International Congress. They presented papers on their respective areas of expertise; Pinkerton spoke of his involvement of the infamous Dinkum Sands off the north coast of Alaska, while Frederick's paper addressed BLM's history of contracting survey services in Alaska, and Hardt conducted a riparian workshop.

FIG was founded in 1878 and is officially recognized as a non-governmental organization by

the United Nations. The international conference, held every four years, is jointly sponsored by FIG, the American Congress on Survey and Mapping, the American Society of Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing, and the Appraisal Institute. Fifty two countries and the United States were represented by 2,100 delegates. There were 120 displays on the latest technologies in surveying to remote sensing. Attendees spent a week attending workshops and technical sessions and networking with professionals in many fields from diverse socio-political backgrounds. The week concluded with the German ambassador hosting

an authentic beer garden with a band, authentic foods and beverages. The closing ceremonies were hosted by the German Organizing Committee who take over as administrators of FIG at the conclusion of the U.S. tenure. The 23rd FIG Congress will convene in Munich, Germany in August of 2006.

The International Federation of Surveyors has member associations and other members in nearly 100 countries and represent more than 230,000 surveying professionals.

*Frank Hardt is a land surveyor with Cadastral Survey.*

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